

CINEFANTASTIQUE

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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

MAY, 1988

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Giger. The name itself sounds *alien*. Hans Rudi (H. R.) Giger is the Swiss surrealist whose design work for ALIEN copped him an Oscar at age 40 and changed the look of science fiction. This issue is devoted to Giger's artistic genius and the enormous influence his work has had on the look of horror, fantasy, and science fiction films.

Writers Jan Doense and Les Paul Robley visited Giger at his combination home/studio/gallery/workshop in Zurich to talk about his work in film, his art, and how his unique style has become common property in Hollywood. A sidebar article "Hollywood Rips-Off H. R. Giger" is a visual catalogue of some of the most blatant Giger imitations, many from some of the biggest names in movies and special effects.

In "Sliming Technology" Brooks Landon looks at how Giger's work has changed our perception of what is alien. Award-winning science fiction artist Vincent Di Fate writes about the influences on Giger's art in "Roots of Imagination," and puts the impact of Giger's work into artistic perspective. And Sheldon Teitelbaum presents a preview of THE MIRROR, a forthcoming film based on the imagery of Giger's famed *Necronomicon* which promises to be the most faithful film adaptation of the artist's nightmare vision to date.

An enduring mystery is the reason why Giger has not been approached to contribute to the filming of ALIENS and forthcoming sequels ALIEN III & IV. If that's something you'd like to see, we suggest you write 20th Century-Fox and let them know. Write Barry Diller, 20th Century-Fox, Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213. Tell him you want to see the "real thing."

Frederick S. Clarke

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HR GIGER

The surrealist who shaped the look of genre film design, on his art and his imitators.

By Jan Doense & Les Paul Robley

Even the pictures illustrate only one or two phases of its endless variety, preternatural massiveness, and utterly alien exoticism . . . There was something vaguely but deeply unhuman in all the contours, dimensions, proportions, decorations, and constructional nuances of the blasphemously archaic stonework . . .

H.P. Lovecraft

Giger's work disturbs us, spooks us, because of its enormous evolutionary time-span. It shows us, all too clearly, where we come from and where we are going.

Timothy Leary

Swiss surrealist H. R. Giger's design work for *ALIEN* revolutionized the look of science fiction films, and is often imitated. Surprisingly, the artist has not been asked to work on either sequel.

Giger lives near Zurich airport in a nondescript two-story flat. Giger is nothing like you expect. The meek, cherub-faced artist who comes to the door seemed at odds with the horrors he paints for a living. He prefaces our interview by conducting a grand tour of his home as if I am the first to view its strange, yet beautiful, one-of-a-kind furnishings. Upstairs a dinette set is surrounded by biomechanical *ALIEN*-style chairs. A unique glass coffee table is held up by six crucified Christ figures, three right-side up, and three upside-down, representing the holy and infernal trinities. A deformed Swiss camera housing mutates into a nightmarish metallic cyclops.

All around the house are hung huge panoramic gray-



Giger in the dining room of his Zurich home with his pet Siamese cat, Muggi, surrounded by one of his large paintings which he refers to as "environments." The chair is Giger's "Harkonnen" design, inspired by Frank Herbert's "Dune."

black triptyches of famous works from Giger's *Necronomicon*, a book of early drawings whose title is derived from Lovecraft, which later served as the inspiration for the creature in *ALIEN*. Sleek, beautiful women with upturned eyes and a deathlike pallor look out from the artwork, steely serpents grow into phalluses, diseased ribs and vertebrae. Like works in his gallery, Giger's two Siamese cats, Muggi (meaning "little mosquito") and Noneli, pose like Egyptian statues. He often uses them as models for his paintings. Muggi still bears the stitches on its forehead from three recent brain operations.

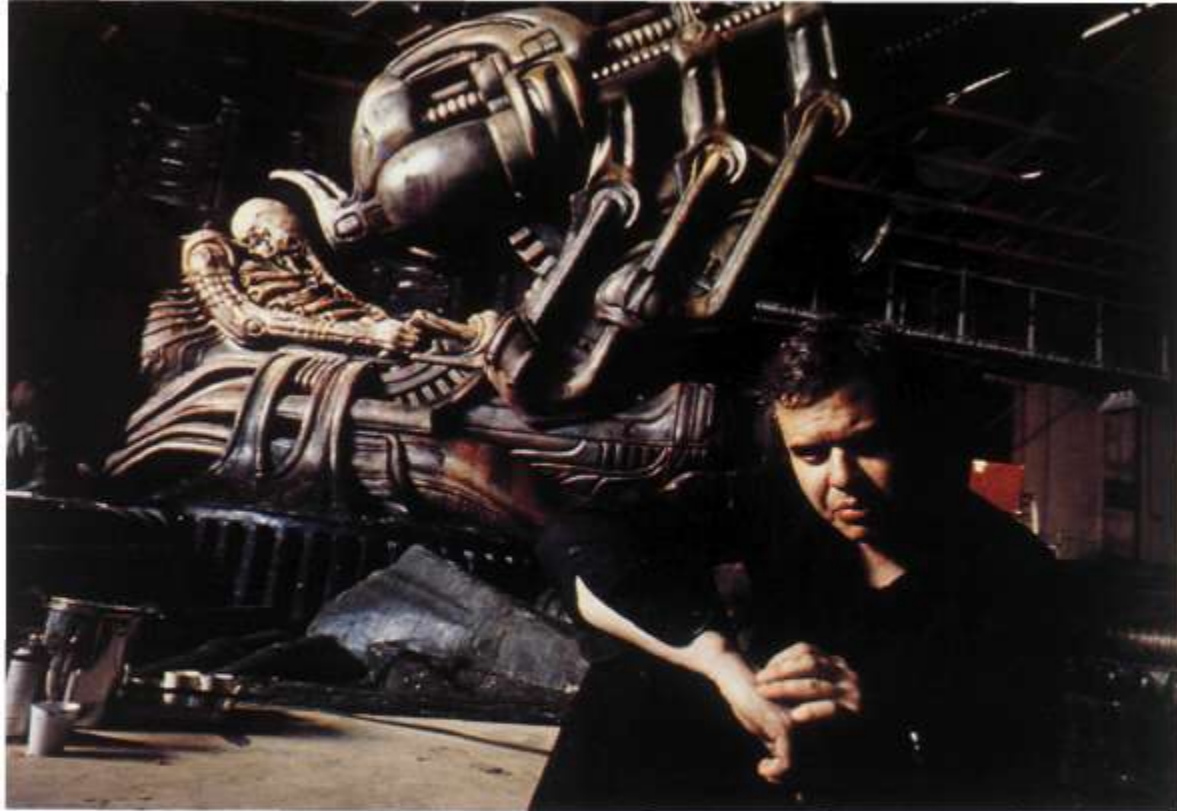
Giger's abortive contribution to MGM's *POLTERGEIST II* has soured the artist on working for Hollywood, which commonly borrows from his work without asking. Giger is more flattered than outraged by his movie imitators, but still yearns to exert the kind of creative control over a film project that he enjoys in the creation of his paintings. To get that control Giger has gone the independent route to work on *THE MIRROR* (see separate story, page 32), a film that promises to translate the nightmare imagery of his *Necronomicon* paintings to the screen.

Which of your paintings are they using for *THE MIRROR*?

They are using some of my best paintings for the film. You will see them through the mirror in 3-dimensional form. One of them, "The Spell," I began in 1972 and finished in '76. I've done about three or four of these



THE MIRROR, a film by director Bill Malone, will visualize Giger's world in three dimensions using paintings like this one from the artist's famed *Necronomicon*, a book of Giger's early work which inspired the design look of *ALIEN*. The work is *Li II*, a 1974 acrylic painting 4.5'x6', a portrait of the artist's actress lover Li Tobler, who died by her own hand in 1975.



Giger poses with his handiwork from *ALIEN* (1979), on the set at England's Pinewood studios. A meticulous perfectionist, Giger worked with studio craftsmen in the sculpting, casting, construction, painting and final detailing of his designs for the film.

large works, which I call environments. They are all about 420 cm long and 240 cm high [approx. 14'x8']. I make them in three pieces so I can get them out of the house. [Giger also uses a dumbwaiter system to move the artwork while he paints, a method borrowed from Salvador Dali.]

Will you actually work on the set for THE MIRROR?

I will not have much to do on the film. For me it's best when someone takes my images and brings them to life and I don't have to invent another thing. I hope to control everything. Otherwise, it never ends up looking like my stuff. It always looks influenced by the artist who is doing it. The problem is to find

someone who can make my stuff look exactly like it is. I would prefer to use the man who modeled my home furnishings, Cornelius de Fries. He is the best for me because he knows my work.

Will you work on THE MIRROR yourself and sculpt as you did on ALIEN?

No, I don't think so. Just oversee. I want to be very much involved in the film because I have never been satisfied with what filmmakers have done with my work in the past. I was horrified about *POLTERGEIST II*. That was probably my mistake for not being there. This time, if they want to transform my images they can't change a lot. But it's difficult to see how

my paintings look from the side. I will provide advice and make sketches to show how they look dimensionally.

What did you think of the changes made in the design of your creature in ALIENS?

I thought the mechanization was done very well. I was a little depressed because nobody asked me to work on this film. I was in Los Angeles at the time working on *POLTERGEIST II*, and I asked around about *ALIENS*. For me it would have been the most logical thing to work on that film. I was very anxious to collaborate but nobody called me. I'd much rather have done a second *ALIEN* than a second *POLTERGEIST* because nat-

urally I felt more related to *ALIEN*. Perhaps the *POLTERGEIST II* people wanted to keep me away from *ALIENS* for fear of losing me. I inquired everywhere but no one could or would inform me about it.

You received compensation, though...

No! Nothing. They put my name in the credits as designer of the original alien concept, but I never got any money. In my contract, Fox can make as many films as they want. It's always the company's rights, and they do what they want.

Did you like ALIENS?

Actually, I expected more after all the enthusiastic reviews. It's a bit too American for me—too much action. I prefer suspense. Half of the action in *ALIENS* would have been sufficient for one film, I think. Far too much is happening. It's a bit like *RAMBO*.

What about the film's art direction, especially the design of the Alien Queen?

It's all beautifully done, everything, the designs and the way they're executed. I'm particularly fond of the robot, which is operated by Ripley—*Das war ganz toll, nicht?*—that yellow monster with those pincers. The Alien Queen is also nice. She's a bit smaller in the face than my alien but my basic design was very well studied. She was frighteningly well animated. Of course in that respect a lot has been learned in the past eight years. The face-huggers were well done, too. As far as the designs are concerned I've no criticism, only the film's pace bothers me. And I believe a lot of Europeans react like that. They would

HOLLYWOOD RIPS-OFF H. R. GIGER

Since *ALIEN* burst into the consciousness of Hollywood in 1979, the distinctive biomechanical style of designer H. R. Giger has cropped up in numerous films from some of the biggest names in the genre, like James Cameron, David Cronenberg, Rick Baker, Stan Winston, et al. Here's a list in no particular order and by no means complete:



Oscar-winner Chris Walas did *GALAXINA*'s chestburster.

GALAXINA (1980). This Crown release, written and directed by William Sachs and starring the late Dorothy Stratten as the titular android, featured a spoof of *ALIEN*'s chest-bursting scene. The little alien (left) was designed by Chris Walas, a later Oscar-winner for *THE FLY*, now turned director.

ALIENS (1986). Writer/director James Cameron's continuation of the film that started it all. Stan Winston picked-up an Oscar for his work, based



Stan Winston got an Oscar for copying Giger's designs for *ALIENS*.

GIGER

SLIMING TECHNOLOGY

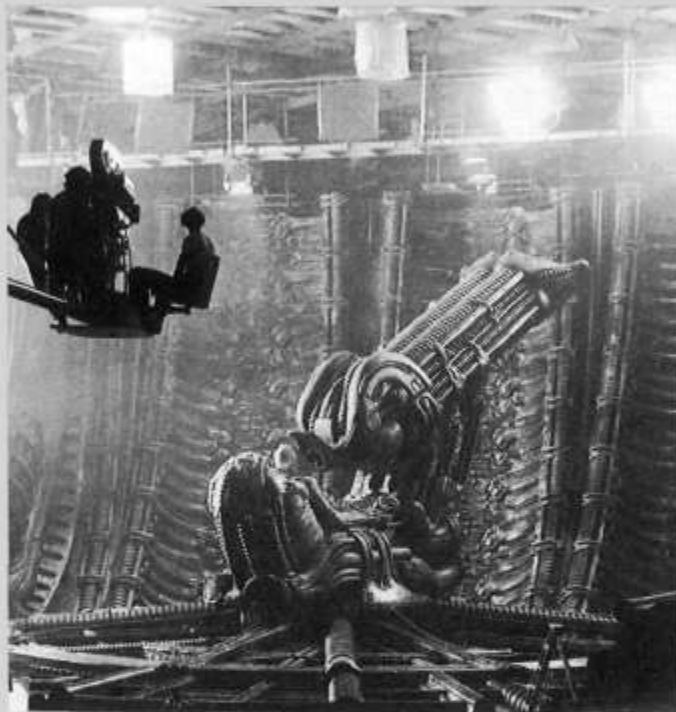
Giger's surreal vision of the future profoundly touched something in us, remapping our sense of what is "the other."

By Brooks London

H. R. Giger has proven to be one of those rare talents who can turn a film genre in a new direction. It may be too soon to say that after Giger science fiction film will never be the same again, but it certainly hasn't been the same since that moment in 1979 when those grumbling explorers from the *Nostramo* made their way through vaginal portals into the vast ribcage cathedral of the Giger-designed spaceship of **ALIEN**.

Centered in its interior the explorers saw the body of a huge fossilized extraterrestrial. Reclining at some unfathomable gun or instrument mount—its bones, muscles, and tendons indistinguishable from the mount's tubes, cables and conduit—the giant dead astronaut seemed to grow out of and flow into the chair, just as the gun or instrument emplacement seemed to grow out of the ship itself, its organic nature more clear than its technological purpose. From that literally awe-inspiring moment on, **ALIEN** was Giger's film, and from that film on, the Giger "biomechanoid" look, at once terrifying and erotic, has been omnipresent in science fiction film.

Sure, Giger had some help from director Ridley Scott, effects expert Carlo Rambaldi, production designer Michael Seymour and others; **ALIEN**, like any major film production, was a supremely collaborative effort. For science fiction and fantasy films this collaboration grows ever more complicated and reciprocal since special effects and production design often determine the look and feel of a film as much or more than does its script, acting, directing and camera work. So claims about influence, inspiration and derivation within and among



Filming Giger's "Space Jockey" design for **ALIEN**, a turning point in the look of science fiction. Right: Giger's "Alien" design for the film, a six-foot replica that glares out at visitors to the artist's Zurich gallery/apartment/workshop.

science fiction and fantasy films tend to be more subjective than authoritative, a process more of visual matching than of determining degrees of indebtedness. What one critic calls a rip-off, another may see as *homage*, while a third may talk of "convergence." Still, who can doubt that Giger's surreal vision of the future profoundly touched something in us, remapping our sense of "the other," the alien, while resurrecting dance of death skeletal iconography to haunt us with our own mortality. "Everything I designed in the film," revealed Giger, "used the idea of bones."

Certainly, Giger's art played an instrumental role in Ridley Scott's approach to **ALIEN**. Scott has said of his first look at

image-driven film.

Of course, following **ALIEN**'s huge box office success, a number of films, most of them awful, attempted to copy its format, either in whole or in part. A Roger Corman production, **GALAXY OF TERROR** (1981), probably came closest to matching Giger's biotechnological terror (to be imitated by Roger Corman must be a singular kind of validation), while the imploding chest scene in John Carpenter's



THE THING (1982) was clearly the most original response to the "chestbursting" stage of Giger's alien. A list of **ALIEN**/Giger inspired or influenced SF creatures in recent films (see page 26) would include those in **ALIEN CONTAMINATION**, **XTRO**, **CAPTAIN EO**, **CREATURE**, **HORROR PLANET**, **FORBIDDEN WORLD**, and **SCARED TO DEATH**, but to note the many inferior attempts to mimic Giger actually misrepresents his larger impact on SF film.

Giger's real accomplishment is more abstract and has to do with reorienting our notion of the alien from the creature to its ecology and environment, and with making us rethink the look of technology. If, as film scholar Vivian Sobchack (*Screening Space*) argues, the last ten years have seen a fundamental paradigm shift in science fiction film, one radically revising long-held assumptions about the nature of space and time and the depiction of the alien, then Giger must be acknowledged as one of the primary architects of that shift.

Although **ALIEN** was an old-style monster-from-deep-space film, its rudimentary plot a kind of spaceship-gothic more than anything new to think about, its imagery challenged us to see in a completely new way the spaces in outer space. That is, it immersed us in a *systematically* alien environment, an entire implicit ecology, confronting us with a spaceship at once so vast and so strange looking that it subverted our comfortable distinctions between biology and machinery, our expectations of mechanical forms with implicitly clear functions, and with a creature that threatened us from without and from within.

" To note the many inferior attempts to mimic Giger actually misrepresents his larger impact on SF film. Giger made us rethink the look of technology."



Above: With director Ridley Scott (l) and creature fabricator Carlo Rambaldi, Giger (rear) picks up his Oscar for special effects design for **ALIEN** in 1980. Below: Giger's aesthetic extended far beyond the film's effects: Left: Vaginal portals lead to the derelict ship's interior. Right: Discovering the egg chamber.

Giger's genius lay in combining the imagery of technology with that of biology, in offering us a vision of a future so different as to challenge many of our long-standing filmic assumptions about distinctions between humanity and alien, life and non-life, science fiction and fantasy. More than anyone else, it was Giger who persuaded us that the future may have as much to do with slime as with circuitry, that advanced life forms may have advanced beyond or developed outside of our mechanical- and electronic-centered conception of technology.

Accordingly, a better index to Giger's impact on SF film would be to note how subsequent movies as different as **KRULL**, **INVADERS FROM MARS**, **BUCKAROO BANZAI**, **LIFE-FORCE** and **EXPLORERS** have shown advanced alien living spaces to be organic and inexplicable, and how films as different as **THE TERMINATOR**, **PREDATOR**, and **ROBOCOP** have posited a new kind of existence blurring the imagery if not the concepts of the biological and the mechanical. Indeed, it should also be noted that many of the assumptions of current cyberpunk literature posit a distinctly Gigerish future.

What Giger has provided SF film in the '80s is iconography to rival that of the classic SF films of the past, a pattern of images as recognizable and as emblematic as was the figure of **CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON**'s gillman or the majestic but sterile look of space travel in Stanley Kubrick's 2001. Giger may not have done this alone, but it's hard to imagine that it would have happened without him.



rather see a series of slow build-ups towards climaxes instead of one immense build-up towards a single climax.

Since *ALIEN* your style seems to have become common property in Hollywood. Does that upset you, or are you just flattered?

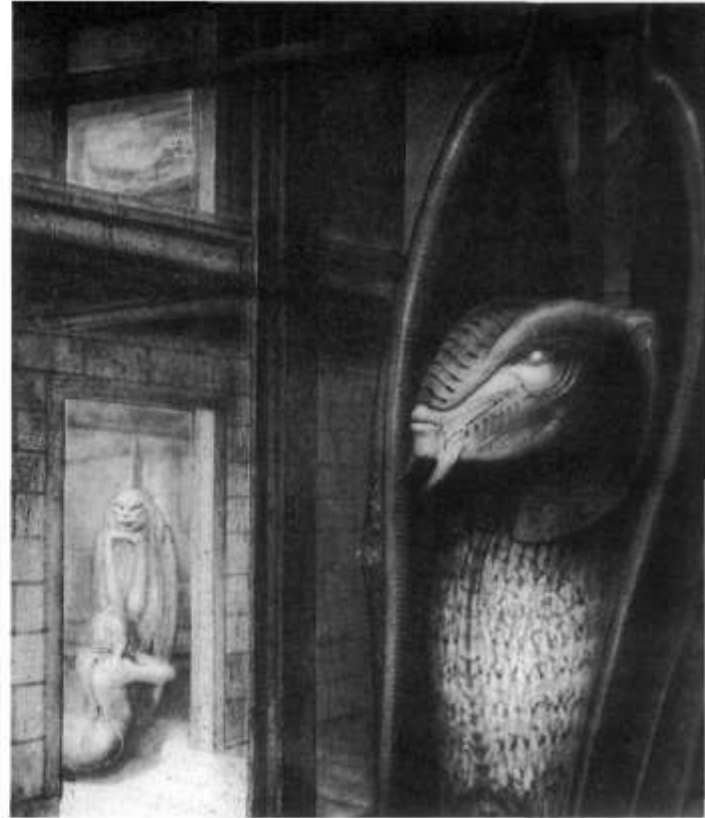
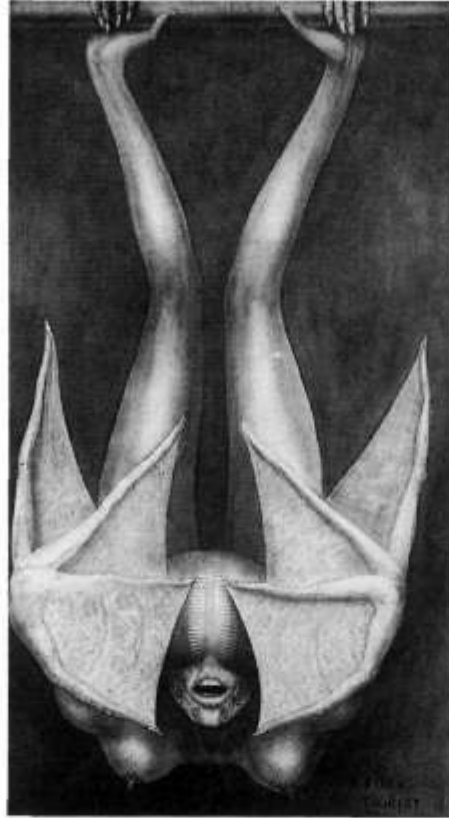
If it's done well I'm flattered, certainly. Although I usually come a day after the fair in two ways: I'm not being compensated and my name is never mentioned. If at least that would happen I could be content with the thought of having inspired something. And if the film turns out well, that would be fine. One should be glad with all good films that are made.

What about Francis Coppola's *CAPTAIN EO*, the short film starring Michael Jackson and Angelica Huston that's playing at Disneyland and...

I know, it looks just like my alien. I have seen some pictures of it. You know, some years ago 20th Century-Fox sued the firm Bally because they had fabricated an unauthorized *ALIEN* pin-ball machine. Bally had to pay dearly for that. I only received a couple of dollars and one of those pin-ball machines because I had transferred my rights in the alien design to Fox. So it's up to Fox to go after Coppola if they care to.

You don't seem angry with the way Hollywood filmmakers have ripped off your work? [The term "rip off" was a new one for Giger, who asked what it meant before answering.]

There are a lot of American filmmakers who copy my work.



Giger's alien designs for *THE TOURIST* (1982), an unfiled Universal project developed by director Brian Gibson, about a seedy New York hospital which keeps extraterrestrials from other worlds under sedation for the sadistic experimentation of scientists.

They send me a letter and say it is nice to have you in my film [Giger laughs]. So, I can't say anything. It's nice to be there. You know, sometimes people have the same idea at the same time. My stuff is not completely fresh. I have been influenced by Gaudi, Kubin, Dali...

What other artists have influenced you?

First and foremost is Hieronymus Bosch.

In 1982, at the request of director Brian Gibson who would later ask Giger to work on *POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE*, Giger made seventy sketches and eleven paintings for a project entitled *THE TOURIST*. This science fiction / horror film, situated in

the near future, was to center on a gloomy New York hospital where different kinds of alien creatures are being kept under sedation with a drug that makes them feel at home while scientists expose them to sadistic experiments. A remorseful scientist decides to help transport the aliens back to their respective home planets. The film was never made because the production company, Universal, opted for a more cheerful science fiction film instead: *E.T.—THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL*.

What kind of preproduction art did you do for *THE TOURIST*?

I designed all kinds of aliens: flying, hanging, lying in the

water. It was all very brutal. I don't think there's any chance the film will ever be made.

Why were you dissatisfied with Gibson's *POLTERGEIST II*?

I got mixed-up in the wrong project. I started working on that film under a misrepresentation. I thought: they're going to make a film with a big budget, which will allow to a large degree the input of my own fantasies. The producers [Mark Victor and Michael Grais, who also wrote the screenplay] confirmed this feeling and gave me the impression that I would be able to create something really new for this film and that the script could be adjusted if need be.

on Giger's credited designs for the original. Though not invited back, Giger's distinctive design sense nevertheless permeated the enterprise. A pity that producers Walter Hill and David Giler, who haven't approached Giger about contributing to *ALIEN III* either, have decided to settle for imitations with the "real thing" available.

LIFEFORCE (1985). Tobe Hooper's stylish version of Colin Wilson's "Space Vampires" features a bio-gothic alien spaceship



The interior of the biomechanical spaceship in *LIFEFORCE*.

straight out of Giger, the work of designer John Graysmark and effects supervisor John Dykstra. *ALIEN* screenwriter Dan O'Bannon co-wrote the script with Don Jakoby.

SATURN 3 (1980). This tale of a robot amok on a base on one of Saturn's moons was produced and directed by Stanley Donen from a story by the late *STAR WARS* designer John Barry. Hector, the Giger-style robot, was designed by Stuart Craig and effects man Colin Chivers.



Hector, the rampaging Giger-styled robot of *SATURN 3*.



Puppeteering "The Great Beast of POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE at Richard Edlund's Boss Film effects company. Giger claims his design idea was botched.

Unfortunately things went differently. They led me on and I was rather displeased by that. I ask myself: why don't they hire the same people who did the original? Why me? I only cause trouble because I'm not easily satisfied and I make bad publicity if I don't like the film.

For *POLTERGEIST II* you made drawings of *The Reverend*, as portrayed by the late Julian Beck. Why weren't these

used?

Originally the film was going to start with a scene in which *The Reverend* was to be discovered, sitting in the underground Cuesta Verde cave, surrounded by some of his followers. And I thought, in this film evil mostly stems from a worm. So I wanted to go along that line by showing two worm's tails protruding from the ears of *The Reverend*, thus marking

" I have never been satisfied with what filmmakers have done to my work in the past. I was horrified by *POLTERGEIST II*. "

- Surrealist H. R. Giger -

the evil. I wanted them to retract the instant a light shined on them, like when you enter a hole with a pocket-torch and the animals who live there hide themselves—the devil retracting his horns, that was the idea. But in the film they turned it into *scheisse*, with a skeleton dropping something from its mouth. I described it all perfectly well in my drawings, but apparently they didn't understand or they didn't *want* to understand. The same goes for the hill in the cave, with those corpses of the Reverend's followers lying on it: you can't even see it properly! It was filmed much too dark! Besides it was very badly constructed.

Were you ever asked to attend the shooting or the construction of the models?

No, there was no money available for that. But I also didn't really want to be there. My partner, Connie de Fries, was there to construct small scale models from my drawings. But he couldn't get a labor permit and wasn't allowed to contribute to the construction of the actual models. Apparently none of the special effects people understood my drawings. They didn't have the faintest notion of what could have

been done with them.

There are several scenes in *ALIEN* that are entirely Giger-styled, but you aren't really happy with the way your work was treated in that film, either ...

For *ALIEN I* constructed the monster and other models myself. I was there and I watched how they were being filmed. But in that case there also was an incompetence ... I wasn't very happy with *ALIEN*. No, in fact, it was rather terrible. Ridley Scott and I wanted well-trained people, for instance, technicians who had worked at Disneyland, who knew how to mechanize things. When I visited Disneyland I thought: my God, these are the people we should have had! Whoever made the robots of the Caribbean pirates and the haunted house, they could have worked on *ALIEN*, that would have been wonderful. *Ganz toll*. But on *ALIEN* there was a lack of experience and knowledge of good techniques. At Disneyland they have been doing these things for twenty years.

Wouldn't you have preferred the *Alien Queen* as *POLTERGEIST II*'s Great Beast?

[Giger laughs] the Great

continued on page 34



Does *THE INTRUDER WITHIN* look at all familiar to you?

THE INTRUDER WITHIN

(1981). A made-for-TV movie about an oil-rig in the Atlantic plagued by a prehistoric creature that impregnates Linda Mason Green, who gives birth to its hideous offspring. The creature designs by James Cummins and Henry Golas reveal orthodontia that is strikingly similar to that of Giger's *ALIEN*. Said designer Golas (11:2:54), "I think if you actually compare the two, you will find they have no resemblance." His creature is at left, you decide.



Director Bill Malone's *SCARED TO DEATH* sewer monster.

SCARED TO DEATH

(1980). The directorial debut of Bill Malone, the writer and director of *THE MIRROR*, the forthcoming feature film to showcase Giger's design sense. Though Malone's first low-budget effort couldn't afford to pay Giger for his inspiration, Malone at least freely acknowledged the debt. Jim Suthors built the film's creature, a Syngenor (Synthetic Genetic Organism), which wanders the Los Angeles sewer system in search of prey in *ALIEN*-styled action.

THE METAMORPHOSIS

P 7



POLTERGEIST II



METAMORPHOSIS

P 8



Giger's designs for one of the most disturbing scenes in POLTERGEIST II, in which actor Craig T. Nelson vomits up the embryo that grows into The Great Beast (inset). Rather than the quick cut action of the filmed scene, Giger's original concept as noted on his early preliminary sketches is even more disturbing, calling for the creature to come "out slowly, like a piece of shit."

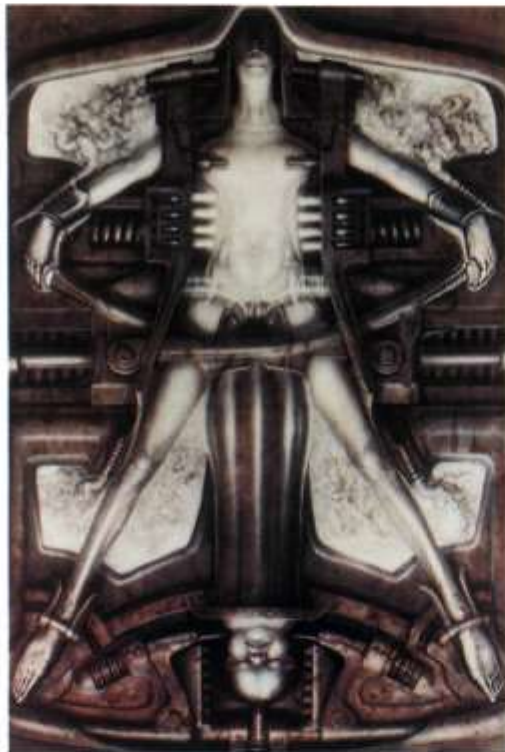
THE MIRROR

Giger's Necronomicon imagery comes alive on the screen.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

There exists a universe a dimension apart yet only a whisper away from our own . . . an ancient, evil civilization, a race of horrific living things spawned from the grotesque marriage of man and machine. Unable to reproduce, they have waited near death for eons . . . for someone from our dimension to open the portal between their world and ours. . . the mirror. The "Necronomicon"—the Book of the Dead, tells of a netherglass with the power to bend time and space... that 7000 years ago a seeker of dark secrets found the mirror and fell through a hole in time. For centuries the glass was lost. Now the mirror has been found again. And soon their wait will be over. The human female specimen they need will be theirs.

So reads the promo for **THE MIRROR**, a \$6 million feature based upon the paintings in H. R. Giger's *Necronomicon*, set to begin an 11-week production schedule in April. William Malone, its director, has assembled some of the best effects and design people in the business: Michael (FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR) Novotny as production designer; Robert and Dennis Skotak (ALIENS) in charge of special visual effects; Doug Beswick (STAR WARS, THE TERMINATOR, ALIENS)



Stillbirth Machine, a 1976 Giger painting from his book *Necronomicon*, 4.5"x6.5", which serves as one of the preproduction images for the world of **THE MIRROR**.

as special makeup effects man, and Giger himself, whom Malone persuaded to fly to Los Angeles to supervise overall conceptual design for the film.

And lest you have any doubts about Malone's record—his last effort, **CREATURE**, did fall a bit short of being a genre *tour de force*—consider this: Giger was not at all pleased with the outcome of his most recent venture into filmmaking—the abortive **POLTERGEIST II**. Intimates say that after that travesty, Giger in-

tended never again to get suckered in by another slick Hollywood deal. In which case Malone must have shown him one hell of a hot script, because this is an independent production, and Malone doesn't have scads of money to salve Giger's wounds from a botched construction job.

Indeed, the prospect of translating intact the acclaimed grotesqueries of *The Necronomicon* into three dimensional form was apparently impossible for either the Swiss artist or these other effects wizards to resist. Mention Giger, these people are eager. Explained art director Novotny: "How to invest the next year of your life is always a major decision. But when a project has the potential to be a knockout—Academy Award material—we're willing to take a stab at it."

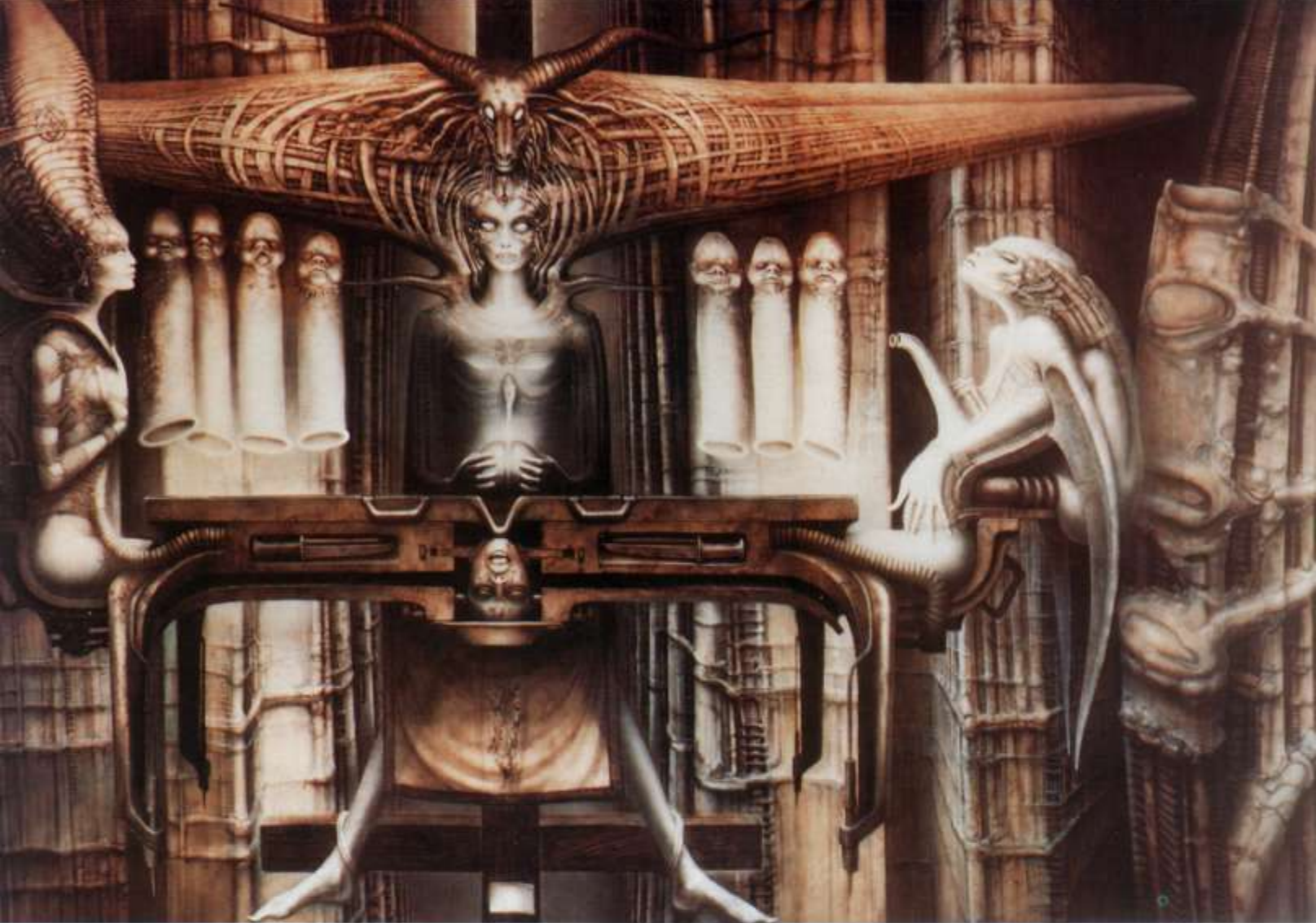
Malone described the project as "Alice Through the Looking Glass meets H. P. Lovecraft." He wrote a first draft of the script in 1980, after finding a French edition of Giger's *Necronomicon* in the dealers' room at a science fiction convention. "It blew me away," he said. "And later, when I heard he was doing Ridley Scott's **ALIEN**, it was very easy to pick out what the alien



was going to look like—there was only one suitable painting in the book.

"I think the stuff in **ALIEN** is the best of the film adaptations of Giger's work," Malone added. But he thinks Scott only scratched the surface. "Giger has a wealth of stuff—images even more powerful than those in **ALIEN**. It gets you on a primordial, gut level. His paintings are disturbing, but you keep wanting to look at them anyway. They are scary but also elegant. I kept going back to them, and the story just came to me."

Malone's story documents the travails of housewife July Daley, whom a race of Gigeresque bio-mechanical monstrosities has chosen to spawn a newly-invigorated race of human/machine hybrids. Daley runs aground when she hangs an antique mirror on her wall that serves as a portal into their dimension. Much beasting about ensues as they try to drag her back to their home turf.



Two Necronomicon paintings by Giger which serve as preproduction designs for the film imagery of *THE MIRROR*. Above: *The Spell II*, a 1974 three piece "environment," measuring about 8'x14.' Right: *The way of the magician*, one of four paintings in Giger's *The Passage Temple*, with steps leading to godhood.

After Malone completed *CREATURE* for Moshe Diamant's Trans World Entertainment—the picture was made for \$1.3 million and did \$8 million theatrically and millions more in video—he took his script, then called *DEADLY IMAGES*, to Vista. "But they were going through a bunch of changes and, as it turned out, could only finance one picture. They did *FRIGHT NIGHT* instead, and threw us out the door."

Later in 1985, Malone met Jack Murphy, a Canadian producer who had handled the Canadian distribution of Malone's first film, *SCARED TO DEATH*, in 1979. Murphy, who had moved to Los Angeles three years earlier, enthusiastically embraced the project.

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Unused design concepts for POLTERGEIST II by H. R. Giger, showing the artist's concept of a "Smokebeast," an omen appearing to the Indian shaman at the film's beginning. Below: Views of Julian Beck as the Reverend Kane, showing Giger's use of a worm motif as a symbol of evil, also abandoned.



" I want to work on a film with someone who is aiming for quality and something new, not for profit only, someone like Fellini. "

- Surrealist H. R. Giger -

Beast in **POLTERGEIST II** was really *scheisse*. Very bad. Yes, I would have preferred the Alien Queen. Thus you can see a designer has no influence whatsoever in these matters. From designs I made long ago something very good is derived, while my more recent work has been screwed up.

Why are you still willing to do film design after all your disappointments?

I should like to work with someone who is aiming for quality and something new rather than profit only. I receive a lot of scripts from beginners, people who are going to do their first film and admire me. I'd like to be asked by someone like Fellini. That would really enthuse me. Unfortunately it never happens [Giger laughs]. Dan O'Bannon, with whom I'm still regularly in touch, keeps telling me he would like to do Lovecraft's *The Colour Out of Space* with me as soon as he's able to raise the necessary funds. That could be interesting because he's definitely one of the greatest Lovecraft experts around.

But I consider everything I'm offered. Since **ALIEN** I have received approximately fifteen scripts for which they want me as a designer. Only

one, I think, was in German. All the others were in English or in French. For me it's difficult to comprehend those. I always ask: please translate the script in German, it makes my imagination work better.

You made designs for DUNE (9:1:35 and 14:4/5:33) for two aborted productions, but when David Lynch finally filmed it, you were not involved. Why?

I was very eager to be. Through friends I asked Lynch if he was interested in my cooperation. I never heard from him. Later I came to know that he was upset because he thought we copied the chestbuster in **ALIEN** from his monster baby in **ERASERHEAD**, which was not so. Ridley Scott and I hadn't even seen that film at the time. If one film influenced **ALIEN** it was **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**. I would have loved to collaborate with Lynch on **DUNE** but apparently he wanted to do all the designs by himself. I think he did a great job. I admire Lynch tremendously. I think he's one of the greatest filmmakers and I would very much like to work for him some time.

Do you see any points of comparison between your work and Lynch's oeuvre as a director?



Giger's alien costume for **SWISS MADE**, a 1969 short by F. M. Murer about a space visitor who records everything he sees, sits as an ashtray in Giger's gallery/studio.

Sometimes elements in my paintings resemble the technology of the last century, similar to Lynch. I use tubes, pipes, and broken down machinery.

Can you name your favorite films and directors?

Lynch's **BLUE VELVET**. Ridley Scott. I'm not crazy about fantastic films. I prefer reality.

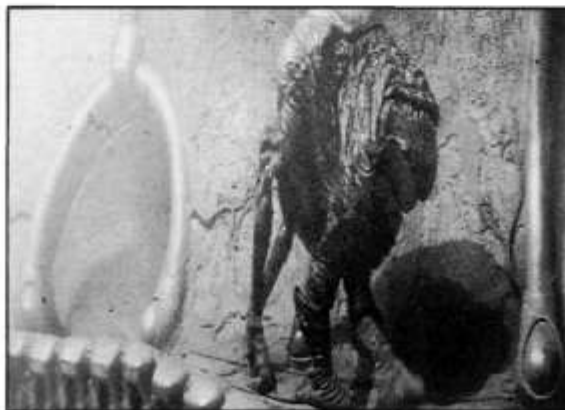
In 1985 you designed the poster for FUTUREKILL

(15:2:19). Did you have anything else to do with that film?

No. When Ron Moore, the director, visited an exposition of my work near Zurich he asked me if I would care to do the poster art for his film, which was being edited. Moore showed me a couple of photographs of this character with a skull-like head which looked just like it had been stolen from one of my works. I thought that

INVADERS FROM MARS

(1986). Director Tobe Hooper again, this time with a remake of the 1953 film by William Cameron Menzies. Instead it looked more like **ALIEN**, with creatures by Stan Winston. Rather than Giger, concept designer William Stout cited the work of a Giger influence, that of Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi, as inspiration for the film's biomechanical look. The film's production designer, Les Dilley, had in fact worked with Giger on the original **ALIEN**.



INVADERS FROM MARS, Giger-inspired or was it Antonio Gaudi?

FUTUREKILL (1985).

Giger did the poster art for this Texas-filmed low-budgeter about violence-prone college punks who dress up in costumes styled on his biomechanical look. The film doesn't quite live up to the poster.

GALAXY OF TERROR

(1981). A Roger Corman **ALIEN** rip-off directed by Bruce Clark. The designs of an alien pyramid and biomechanical landscape straight out of Giger's original concepts were by James Cameron and



Giger's **FUTUREKILL** poster, a chance to cash-in himself.



About The Cover Giger is shown cocooned by his own Alien, a take-off on the design he made for a scene cut from

ALIEN (above), combined with the cover motif of his book "Giger's Alien" (Inset) a diary of his work on the production.

since they had copied that so well already I might as well do the poster. Half a year later I saw the finished film and it was... how shall I put it... it was very colorful, whereas my poster was rather black and white. I liked the colors in the film, they reminded me of BLACK ORPHEUS. But the rest... the poster was well printed, though.

Moore promised to write a script, entirely focused on me and my work: BIOGENESIS. That was a year ago and I'm still waiting.

How do you see yourself as an artist?

I'm an artist on the fringe. Fantastic art is never "in." There seems to be few people

who like fantastic art. In Zurich I think I'm alone. Switzerland is not a very fantastic land. If someone talks about Switzerland, it's always about banks and money or mountains. Not about art...

Your paintings are incredibly detailed, representing a tremendous amount of work. Have you considered using a looser style?

It depends. At the moment I no longer do the large three-piece wall paintings. I do smaller ones. I don't do a lot of originals, about 25 paintings in a year. They are not magical like The Spell. I work best under pressure.

You paint in very muted tones. Do you ever plan to use

vivid colors?

Sometimes I try to use colors, but it doesn't work really. I find that black and white or monochromatic schemes work best for me. Color is against the force of my work. A painting like The Spell would be terrible in color.

How do you paint? Do you make sketches first?

No. It's all airbrush sprayed on paper which has been glued to wood. I use mainly ink and white acrylic paint. Then I put lacquer over it to make sure nothing wet can destroy it. When I do the giant murals, I start on one side of the painting and work to the other. I make sure the angles are right,

but I have no idea what's coming. I use paper that measures 420x240 cm. There's no bigger paper than that. I can't move the paintings for display unless I cut them up. They're really made for this room.

What about the smaller ones? Do you use the same method?

Yes. I just start from one side and go to the other. I paint whatever comes to my mind. There is no pre-planning. For instance, the ones that feature penis imagery and grotesque baby heads, I just felt like doing that. People have said that I look like these babies a little bit. At the time, 1973, there was a problem with oil and gas—the energy crisis. You can see burners in some of my paintings. The other images must also have some reason behind them. Condoms, of course are very "in" now.

You've said many of these images come from your dreams...

You know, sometimes I get tired answering the same questions over and over again. Why do I paint the things I paint? That's beyond words. I have so many different stories to tell, which I can only draw. And everybody always thinks I'm only interested in dark, morbid things, whereas I take a genuine pleasure in cheerful things.

Do you have very bad nightmares?

Often, yeah. Like everybody, I think terrible things.

My dreams are never this bad.

No? This one [Giger points to his wall mural The Spell, see page 32-33] is not bad. Do you



ILM's high-stepping Giger-styled chestbuster for SPACEBALLS.

Bob Skotak, who went on to direct and supervise the effects for ALIENS.

SPACEBALLS (1987). The funniest bit in this Mel Brooks parody of STAR WARS is actually a take-off on ALIEN's chest-bursting sequence, replete with a Giger-style alien that does a high-stepping dance routine, adorned with a hat and cane, after bursting forth from the chest of actor John Hurt, reprising his role from the original film. ILM built the Giger look-a-like.

FORBIDDEN WORLD

(1982). Another Roger Corman ALIEN rip-off, filmed by Alan Holzman to utilize the sets built by Corman for GALAXY OF TERROR. The film's alien, built by Steve Neil and John Carl Buechler, and sculpted by Bob and Dennis Skotak, bears more than a casual resemblance to Giger's dolichocephalic creature design of the monster seen in ALIEN.

Bargain basement Giger, the alien of Roger Corman's rip-off entitled FORBIDDEN WORLD.



GIGER

THE ROOTS OF IMAGINATION

Giger's art speaks in the metaphoric language of dreams, not to the conscious mind, but to its hidden underlying roots.

By Vincent Di Fate

One looks at the works of Hans Giger and sees in them the influences of many artists. Some of his landscapes resemble those of Max Ernst in texture and palette, particularly Ernst's *Day and Night* (1943) and *The Eye of Silence* (1944). His backgrounds bristle with complex details reminiscent of the dream architecture of Antonio Gaudi's unfinished masterpiece *The Church of the Holy Family* or of Ferdinand Cheval's *Dream Palace*. His merging of biological form with mechanical artifact is worthy of the machine-tooled perfection of Marcel Duchamp. There is a hint of the cryptic symbolism of Bocklin, a touch of the timelessness of Tanguy, a smattering of the often startling photo-realism of Dali. Giger fools the eye with a flamboyant showmanship like Escher's, evokes the demonic erotica of Bosch and stretches upon it, at strategic points, the glistening embryonic membrane of Matta. Occasionally whimsical, invariably complex, Giger's art is rife with subtle nuances and baroque redundancies, meticulously crafted from edge to edge in a completely controlled environment where nothing is sacred or immune to his acid genius.

As a child, poor in his studies and plagued by nightmares and bizarre waking dreams, it is little wonder that Giger should come to embrace the tenets of surrealism. At about age five, a photo-spread in *Life* for Jean Cocteau's **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** exposed Giger to the potentials of film as a medium for artistic



Giger in 1978, painting his preproduction design of the derelict ship's egg chamber for ALIEN.

expression and provided the catalyst for his daytime visions.

At eighteen, the artist was employed as a draftsman by the Meissen architectural firm where he developed strengths in formal composition and nurtured an appreciation for the symmetry and ornamental patterns common to the style of church interiors. From 1962 to 1966, he attended The School of Arts and Crafts in Zurich where he studied interior and industrial design, securing a designer's position at the firm of Andreas Christen's upon his graduation. In that same year, Giger met Li Tobler, an actress, with whom he carried

on an often turbulent love affair until her death, by her own hand, in 1975.

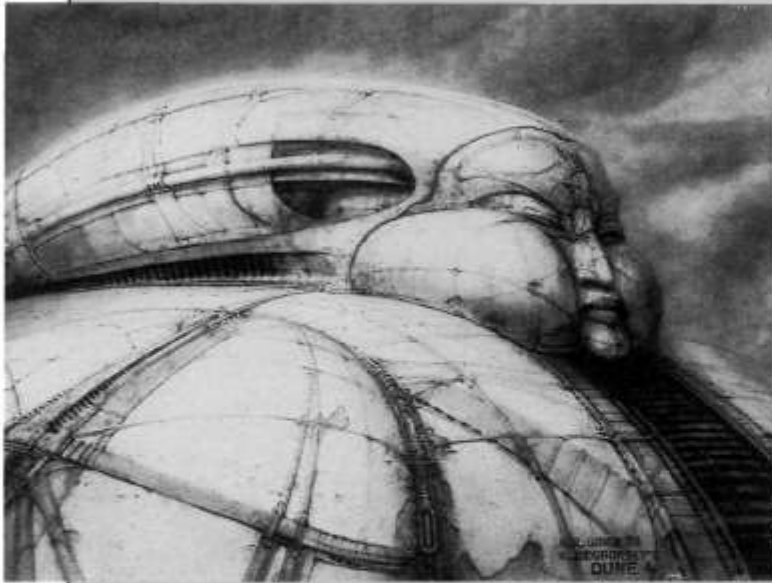
These details of personal history seem to have produced a significant effect on Giger's art. He sees little of the unsettling nature of his work, but rather views his art as cathartic. Indeed, his *Passage* paintings, a series of meticulously crafted pieces produced from the late 1960s to about 1973, represent his brightest and most well-integrated use of color and were used therapeutically by the artist to free himself of some of the more troubling aspects of his waking nightmares.

Although a shadowy presence

has long endured in his art, the tragic death of Li Tobler seems to have marked an increase in the use of pervading and oppressive darks. Despite the artist's claims of an upbeat nature to his work (which seems to evade the detection of most viewers), there is little doubt of the power of Giger's imagery. If the charting of the psychic terrain is indeed the true mission of surrealist art, then it is on this level that Giger speaks most clearly, for his is a most persuasive voice to this inner dialogue and we cannot avoid being drawn to it, no matter how obtrusive or shocking or intimidating. Giger speaks in the metaphoric language of dreams, not to the wakeful mind, but to the hidden intelligence within.

Many of his early drawings were done in india ink applied by pen to tracing paper where the images were carefully and methodically defined. The spattering of ink from a toothbrush through a fine wire sieve was used to cover large areas in a method approximating the effects of airbrush. In the late '60s Giger experimented briefly with oils on a series of small landscapes, but found the medium too time-consuming. He turned to the use of airbrush in 1971 and has largely remained with this technique. The artist applies thin layers of india ink by airbrush directly to waterproof paper which has been mounted on chipboard or plywood panels, no longer requiring the use of preliminary drawing. To this, transparent layers of acrylic paint are applied until the desired colorations are

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Giger's 1975 designs for the unfilmed French production of *DUNE* on which he met Dan O'Bannon, the author of *ALIEN*. Giger's Harkonnen castle is a symbol of aggression, set on a hill of charred bones, with a face that spits destruction.



" If the charting of the psychic terrain is indeed the true mission of surrealist art, then it is on this level that Giger's work speaks to us most clearly."

achieved.

Similar in style to Yves Tanguy, Giger's use of color possesses a quality much like that of a tinted photograph, with the finely rendered images contained in the preliminary inkwork which functions as an underpainting for the acrylics. Thus, color assumes a very secondary role, with the main emphasis on the selection and juxtaposing of images and on Giger's considerable skills at drawing and composition. Like the most vivid of our dreams, they are works best remembered for the strength of their content to which the application of color seems vague and ephemeral and ultimately of little relevance.

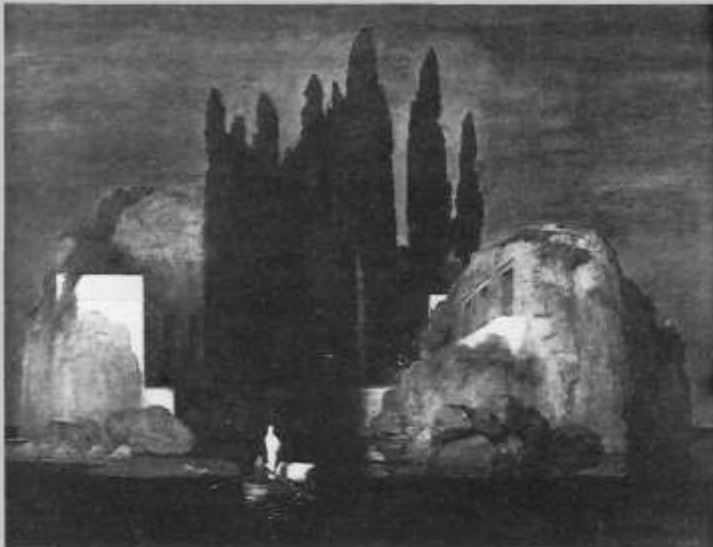
Giger's first involvement with motion pictures came in 1969 with F. M. Murer's forty-five-minute science fiction short *SWISS MADE 2069*, for which the artist contributed a number of designs utilizing his biomechanical method of combining natural and man-made elements. In 1975 he participated in an ill-fated attempt to bring Frank Herbert's sprawling ecological SF novel *Dune* to the screen. Under the creative control of director Alexandro Jodorowsky, a significant number of drawings were prepared by Giger, Chris

Foss and others which showed imagination and promise somewhat beyond the film which director David Lynch finally brought to fruition in 1984. Involvement with Jodorowsky, however, led to a brief meeting with Dan O'Bannon in Paris and O'Bannon was later responsible for bringing H. R. Giger into the planning of *ALIEN*.

It is in *ALIEN* that Giger's talents truly soar, from his organic interiors for the derelict spaceship, to the bleak, oppressive landscape of the alien world, to the creation of a creature so unique and fearsome of aspect as to have inspired a seemingly endless number of imitators.

Ridley Scott's *ALIEN* is still, in its soul, just a B-movie in fancy trappings with more than a casual kinship to such '50s film fare as *IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE* and other lower-bill potboilers. It has become memorable in the annals of SF cinema, not for its compelling story of survival or its relentless, dogged pacing, but for the wolf it hides beneath its glossy, state-of-the-art sheep's clothing. Giger's creature is something dangerously close to the beast in all of us and from whose countenance we are powerless to look away. •

Using many of the mystical properties of "Isle of the Dead" (left), Giger transforms this symbolist masterpiece into his own "Homage to Bocklin," painted in 1977.



feel bad here?

No, I don't feel bad here. I like this type of artwork. It's interesting. To me, though, it is a scary place.

How painful is it for you to sell one of your paintings?

I don't sell the large paintings. Once I sold one to a collector and that was quite hard. Those in this room I will never give away. I want to keep them together. When The Spell went to Japan on exhibit, I had another behind it that took its place.

Guns are present in much of your work. What is your fascination with them?

Guns are like an air brush. You can affect something from far away and not be directly in contact with your subject.

Do you shoot?

Sometimes. There isn't much occasion to do so here in the city. Yesterday, I shot in my small room because there are a lot of rats, or something. They make me so angry. In the middle of the night I made a hole in the ceiling with my drill. Instead of a bullet I put some shot in and blasted into the hole. Then there was peace. It was about three o'clock in the morning after two hours being unnerved. Then it began in another part of my bedroom and I did the same.

Have you ever had a supernatural experience?

Yes. Sometimes I go out of my body from my bed and fly about 40 or 50 centimeters off the ground. I can see my feet in the foreground. This has happened about eight times. Sometimes I've drunk too much wine or taken some sleeping pills. I



Death, Giger's 1977 painting (2.5'x4') from his Necronomicon, which serves as a preproduction design for THE MIRROR, a forthcoming film by director Bill Malone which will bring Giger's surreal imagery to the screen more powerfully than ever before.

feel myself go outside this room right through the walls.

You have said you consider your work upbeat. How do you reconcile that with your obsession with death and dark imagery.

What is this word, "upbeat"?

Happy or positive. Do you feel your work is that way?

No, I don't think so. Happy colors are mostly green, blue, and red. My colors are more akin to an old basement, like rotting potatoes, or worms from the potatoes. My paintings are interior paintings, what I imagine on the inside.

Do you feel your work is pessimistic, then?

Probably, yes. It depends on your level. If your feet are on the ground, it could be nega-

tive. I think my work is positive because it's not a destroyed landscape. The ladies are shown like in a peep show. They are not ugly, but shown in a nice way.

How would you describe something that is not positive?

Boring things. Visions of Hell and Hieronymus Bosch are all positive because something is happening. The most terrible thing for me is if nothing happens; no movement.

You mean like still-lives? Have you ever tried to paint flowers or bowls of fruit?

Yes, I try.

What do they look like?

Nice. I did some in color for my mother.

What does she think about the phalluses and cigar chomp-

ing dead babies seen in your paintings?

She likes my work very much because she's my mother. [Giger laughs] Sometimes she's a little ashamed of what I do. If there are other people around, sometimes she has to defend my work.

In his book, Danse Macabre, Stephen King wrote, speaking about the world of horror films: "They do not love death, as some have suggested; they love life. They do not celebrate deformity, but by dwelling on deformity they sing of health and energy. . . They are the barber's leeches to the psyche, drawing not bad blood but anxiety." Do you see your work in that same light?

Oh, definitely.

CAPTAIN EO (1987). This Michael Jackson short unspooling at Disney's theme parks features an alien design on Angelica Huston straight out of H. R. Giger, right down to the monochromatic color scheme. While admitting the similarities, makeup designers Tom and Bari Burman said their Giger look was "unintentional."



CAPTAIN EO: the similarity to Giger, purely "unintentional."

VIDEODROME (1983). Director David Cronenberg and makeup artist Rick Baker borrowed Giger's biomechanical look for

several of the film's key concepts: a living TV set made of flesh; a vaginal slit in James Woods' chest into which a video cassette is inserted; and a scene in which Woods' hand merges with his gun.

DEEP SPACE (1988). And they keep coming. The latest Giger rip-off is this Trans World Entertainment production, directed by Fred Olen Ray, to be released later this year, starring Bo Svenson. Steve Neill created the suit for a Giger ALIEN look-alike.



Steve Neill's look-alike for TWE's upcoming DEEP SPACE.

life, although he believes that doing so will sorely test his talents. "Giger's work is, in many respects, an aesthetic contradiction," explained Novotny. "It is at once hideous and beautiful. The sense of composition is balanced, but the females are elongated. They almost have a deco feel while being ensconced in a hideous organic form that lacks any definition—you just can't figure out what this stuff is.

"At first glance, his paintings also appear to be monochromatic. In *Necronomicon* the paintings appear to rely solely on steel grays and rust. But you look more closely and you see the overlays of color that produce the effect. It's the same feeling you get when you look at a painting that's been dry-brushed—there are delicate overlays of color on color on color, yet the perception is of a single color."

Interpreting Giger's use of scale in three dimensions also poses a challenge to Novotny. He said that no two people looking at Giger's paintings ever agree on the scale of objects appearing in the background. He doesn't think this is an intentional effect worked by Giger, but it is certainly worth preserving. "My sense is that these shapes feel right to him, have an aesthetic curve or highlight of edge, or lighting effect that functions as a caress. I'm looking forward to finding out if this is indeed the case."

Novotny is not concerned with Giger's reputation as an exacting taskmaster who has proved difficult for many in the industry to work with. But he is concerned with the extent to which Giger's work has become a stylistic commonplace.

"I have a certain amount of distrust for work that is merchandised as product," he said. "It happened to Salvador Dali and it has been the case with Giger. A certain immediacy seems to have been lost—at least for me. So in a sense it will be my job to redefine his work and recapture its urgency. I'd temper that, however, by saying that this is something I intend to pursue together with him. I'm quite confident that we can create a genuinely Gigeresque world-beyond-the-looking-glass."

Preproduction for *THE MIRROR* began late in January, and Giger was slated to arrive in Los Angeles to supervise the film's design. Unfortunately, time and budgetary constraints conspired to permit Giger only two weeks on the sets, which would be built in a warehouse somewhere in the city. According to Malone, half of the film's entire budget has been earmarked for set design and effects, an amount which Malone believes

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Malone's next task was securing the rights to Giger's paintings as well as his active involvement in the project. As Giger was still smarting from the bastardization of his vision in *POLTERGEIST II*, this proved to be no easy feat.

"When I approached him, he was very unhappy about that film," said Malone. "He just didn't want to become involved in any more features. We told him we intended to adapt his work faithfully, and would be delighted to have him physically present to supervise that process. 'Whatever you want, we'll do,' I said."

Malone had an easier time of persuading Novotny, Beswick, and the Skotaks to sign up with the project. He had worked with them on *CREATURE*, and they had not only got on famously together, but made a product that, in terms of look, transcended poor writing, bad performances, and an effects budget so small it boggled the mind.

Indeed, it was that experience that persuaded Novotny to work once again with Malone and colleagues. Novotny recalled that the art department's budget on *CREATURE* had been \$120,000. "On *FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR* we spent \$70,000 a day," he said. "The discrepancy between the two films was vast. On *CREATURE* we spent most of our time pulling rabbits out of our hats. And regardless of the script, plot and performers, I was happy with what we brought off."

Novotny said he is particularly excited by the prospect of bringing Giger's work to three-dimensional

adequate, especially since the film is an independent effort. "There's enough of the filmmaker in me that says if someone gives me a million dollars I can make them a movie. There's always a way of making an effect—one may take more money and less time or more time and less money."

Asked why he has eschewed the possibility of employing computer animation techniques to bring Giger's visions to life more cheaply than by constructing huge, detailed sets, Novotny said it comes down to performance. "Animation and computer graphics might be a great process for creating some of these forms. But pre-planning and storyboarding doesn't lend itself to good acting. It's the old problem of getting an actor to relate to a blue screen."

Novotny appeared indifferent to the likelihood that his work will, by necessity, reflect something of the look Ridley Scott achieved in ALIEN. "If there are any parallels, it will be for good reason—the conceptual art that served as the basis for ALIEN is the same for THE MIRROR. This is clearly Giger's world. But in THE MIRROR, the acting, the script and the situation set the film apart from ALIEN. It's a different film with a different feel. We're not setting this picture in outer space. We don't even have an operational definition of this place beyond the mirror yet."

Novotny said he has been particularly encouraged by the reactions some industry executives and producers have had to the script. "A number of people who believe a film should work toward the lowest common denominator of acceptance have expressed their concerns that a number of scenes were too strong, too real, and too strange. And of course, Bill Malone has no intention of diluting his vision. But the response fills me with confidence." •

Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger in the bedroom of his Zurich apartment/gallery/studio, with the mirror design he plans to use as the key to another world in THE MIRROR.

